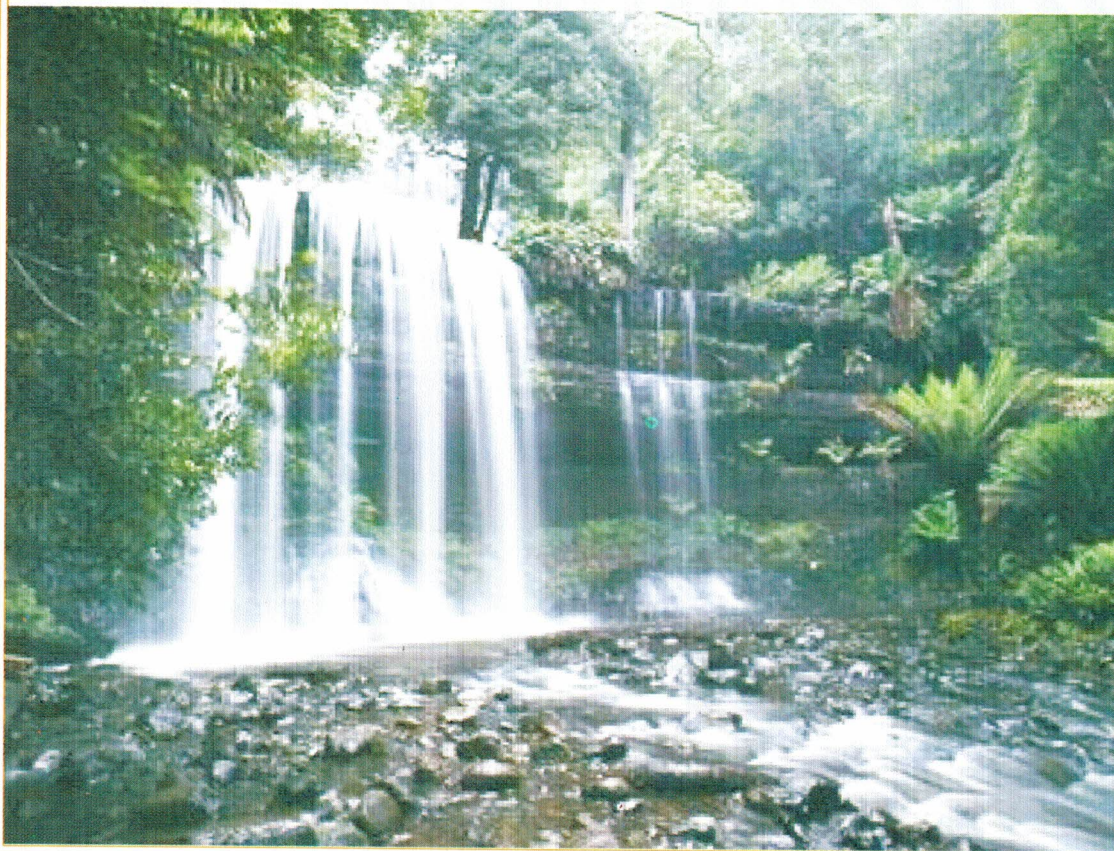


SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

For Those who Reason

*Adversity reveals genius,
prosperity conceals it.*



August 2003

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Character Builds the Nation

Toyota, a Japanese motor company, has been functioning for the last thirty years without a single day ever having been wasted, and without its production ever once having slackened. This is only one of the many examples which explain the fast development of industry in Japan. General Motors and the Ford Motor Company of the U.S.A. are the biggest motor manufacturing companies in the world. The annual production of these motor companies is, on an average, 11 cars per employee, while the Toyota Motor Company annually produces 33 cars per worker.

Considering the non-existence or at least paucity of all the major raw materials of industry in Japan coal, iron, petroleum, etc., Japan still manages to surpass all other countries in industrial progress. One might well ask why. A *Hindustan Times* commentator (25 August, 1981) attributes Japan's success to "A national spirit of compromise and co-operation, and a willingness to endure short-term setbacks for the long-term good of the nation, company or family."

It is temperament then which plays the most crucial role in the making of a nation. It is important in nation-building in the way that bricks are important in any kind of construction work. A house made of unfired bricks is unsafe, because any calamity, even a minor one, can bring it tumbling down. A building, on the other hand, which is made of kiln-fired bricks can be trusted to withstand the onslaught of tempests and floods.

A character so tempered that it can be depended upon through thick and thin like the kiln-fired bricks what in the long run builds a nation, for it is only such a temperament which can remain attuned to the more and more complex procedures of industrialization and remain steadfastly geared to national progress.

How to Lead, Even in Defeat

In 827 A.D., the Mediterranean island of Sicily became part of the growing Islamic empire. For nearly three hundred years it remained under Islamic rule. Then, in 1090, it was reconquered by the Normans.

The founder of the Norman kingdom of Sicily was Roger II (1095-1154). In 1110 he succeeded his brother as count of Sicily and in 1130 was crowned king. Although he belonged to a nation of conquerors, and it was the Muslims whom he had defeated, he still retained a high respect for Arabs and Islam. His coronation mantle was designed by a Muslim artist, and had Arabic inscriptions woven into it. After his coronation, he decided that he would like to have a chart showing the full extent of the Norman empire. He chose a Muslim cartographer, Al-Idrisi, to design this chart, for he was the greatest expert in the field. Al-Idrisi then went on to prepare an atlas for the king, consisting of seventy maps and extensive geographical data. Originally written in Arabic, the first European edition of this atlas was published in 1619.

The selection of Al-Idrisi for the mammoth task of preparing maps of the whole of the known world shows, as the historian J.H. Kramers has pointed out, that at that time the intellectual and academic superiority of Muslims was accepted by one and all. Roger II certainly appreciated the worth of Muslim scholars: he encouraged and sponsored them in their work and in the words of one historian "made Sicily a major meeting place for Christian and Arab scholars."

Though defeated on the field of battle, Muslims continued their intellectual and academic dominance, even in the court of their conqueror. This was because at that time Muslims were far and wide the most advanced race in almost every field of knowledge. The legacy of Islam lives in European languages, which retain many words of Arabic origin.

Muslims today complain of their political, economic and military subjection to non-Muslim nations. They think that they can take back, by protest and militancy, what has been seized from them. But the case of Roger II of Sicilyhis respect for Muslim scholars and their continued intellectual domination even after military defeatshows that the solution to the problems of the Muslims in the modern age lies in their cultivating technological capability, and establishing dominance in the field of modern scientific knowledge. This can be achievednot by protests and militant “fundamentalism”, but by earnest academic endeavour alone; it can be acquired by seeking to give to the world, rather than just take from it.

History Speaks

Roger II (1095-1154), founder of the Norman dynasty in Sicily, holds a distinguished place among medieval European monarchs. He had his capital at Palermo, and is noted for having made Sicily into a prosperous country. He established a strong administration, and constructed a powerful fleet. The success of Roger II, according to a western historian, can be attributed in part to the fact that he “made Sicily a meeting place of European and Arabic scholars.”

Al-Idrisi was a contemporary of Roger II. Born in Marrakesh, he was educated in Spanish universities. Later he travelled extensively in Europe, Asia and Africa. He became the greatest geographer of his age, and a close friend and adviser to Roger II, at whose court he served as official geographer. Roger II originally invited Al-Idrisi to Sicily to make a map of the world for him.

Here we can see the cause of the esteem in which Muslims were held in times past. They made Islam a dominant force on the world scene, not through protests and demands, nor from spreading conflict and terror, but through being useful to the world. By virtue of hard struggle, they established themselves as intellectual leaders of the world. They had something that others did not have, so people flocked to their sides. That was how Muslims raised their standing in the world in times past. It is by the same method that they can improve their position today, and build for a better future.

Giving as God Wills

Man's life and property are gifts of God. He owes everything he possesses to God alone. The only way to give thanks for these innumerable gifts is to dispose of them as God wishes. Such expenditure of one's wealth is symbolic of one's complete trust in God.

Man owes whatever he earns in this world to the fact that God has given him hands and feet to use for this purpose. He has endowed man with eyes and a tongue with which to see and speak. He has blessed him with an intellect which enables him to think and plan. At the same time God has made the world subordinate to man. If the world and that which it contains had not been placed at man's disposal, his physical and mental capabilities alone would never have enabled him to derive any benefit from the world around him. If the wheat grain had not grown in the form of a crop but had stayed lying on the ground like a pebble, it would have become impossible for man to harvest grain from the land. If the powers of nature had not performed their specific functions, electricity could not have been produced, and vehicles would not have been able to move. Whatever man earns in this world is a direct favour from God. In return, man should spend his earnings in a way which would meet with God's approval. He should use his money to help the poor and spend of the wealth which God has granted him in the ways of God has specified.

Real charity is that which is given for God's sake alone, not for fame, self-esteem or worldly reward. Wealth saves one from worldly hardship; that which is given away for God's sake saves one from the hardships of the life after death.

Humility: The Foundation of Unity

The basis of unity is humility. If everyone puts others before himself, then the question of friction does not arise, for disunity stems from everyone putting himself first and wishing that he and his utterances should be given supremacy, no matter what the circumstances. If no one considered himself superior, what would there be to quarrel about?

Clashes of interest and outlook are bound to occur in a society where people live in close contact with each other. When this happens, superiority complexes are apt to surface. Everybody tends to feel sure that his own opinion is correct, that his rights supersede others', and that his own interest must be protected at all costs. Considerations such as these alienate people from one another, which results in disharmony, and if all parties remain adamant, friction can do little but escalate. If, however, one of the parties to a dispute adopts a humble attitude and is willing to stand down, then discord will vanish automatically, and harmony will prevail. Unity can exist only by sinking personal differences, by recognizing the rights of others to disagree and, where agreement is impossible, by bringing matters to a conclusion by agreeing to disagree in a spirit of goodwill.

It is only natural in a society that opinions should clash and grievances arise. These things cannot be eliminated entirely. There will be unity only when people cease to harbour grievances, and when they can live in harmony notwithstanding their differences.

Who Should Preach?

A sage once said that the desire to preach should have the same compulsive quality about it as the desire to satisfy any other normal human urge. Preaching is not like playing a record; nor should it be aimed at eliciting applause from an appreciative audience. Preaching is an externalisation of inner conviction. It is communication to others of a discovered reality; to be a living witness to a truth long hidden from people's eyes. This does not mean just putting a few words together; it is an extremely difficult task. One can only accomplish this task when one feels so desperate an urge to convey one's message that one is ready in the process to face unpopularity and self-sacrifice.

The same applies to writing. Before putting pen to paper, one should study so much that knowledge of itself starts overflowing from one's mind. It is only after sifting through all the available material on any relevant topic, and feeling an irresistible urge to add something of one's own, that one should begin to write. Those who write without experience or inspiration are only defacing the paper on which they write, and those who speak without feeling the compulsion to do so are only adding to noise pollution.

Preaching is not a game: it is representation of God on earth; it is only those who have effaced themselves before God who qualify for this privilege. Those who try to preach without such qualifications do greater harm than good.

The truth is that Islam's being a peaceful religion shows that it is an eternal religion. Had it been a religion of violence, it would not have stood the test of time.

Alms-giving

Believers, bestow in alms a part of that with which We have provided you, before there comes a day when there shall be neither trading, nor friendship nor intercession. Truly it is the unbelievers who are the wrongdoers (2:254).

He who spends his wealth in the way of God is like a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, every ear bearing a hundred grains. God gives abundance to whom He wills; God is munificent and all-knowing. Those who spend their wealth in the way of God then do not follow up what they spend with reproaches and insults shall be rewarded by their Lord; they shall have nothing to fear or regret. A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by insults. God is self-sufficient and clement. Believers, do not mar your almsgiving with taunts and mischief-making, like those who spend their wealth only to be seen and praised by people, and believe neither in God nor in the Last Day. Such people are like a rock covered with a little earth; a shower falls upon it and leaves it hard and bare. They shall gain nothing from their works. God does not guide the unbelievers. But those who give away their wealth from a desire to please God and strengthen their souls are like a garden on a hillside; if a rainstorm falls upon it, it yields up twice its normal crop; and if no rain falls upon it, it is watered by the dew. God sees what you do. Would any of you, being a man well-advanced in age with helpless children to support, wish to have his garden a garden planted with palm-trees, vines and all manner of fruits, and watered by running streams blasted and consumed by a fiery whirlwind? Thus God makes plain to you His revelation, so that you may give thought. Believers, give in alms of the wealth you have lawfully earned and of that which We Have brought out of the earth for you; not of worthless things which you yourselves would only reluctantly accept. Know that God is self-sufficient and glorious. Satan threatens you with poverty and bids you to commit indecency. But God promises you His forgiveness and bounty. God is munificent and all-knowing. He gives wisdom to whom He wills; and whoever is granted wisdom receives great good. But none take heed except people of understanding (2:261-269).

Acknowledgment of the Truth

God manifests Himself on earth through truth. Disbelief in the truth is disbelief in God. One can perpetrate no greater crime on earth than to refuse to accept the truth after it has been made plain. Truth emanates from God, so whoever rejects it is, in fact, rejecting God.

There is nothing strange about the truth. It is inherent in human nature. Since it is so familiar to mankind, why do people fail to accept it? The answer is that they are psychologically inhibited from doing so. Acceptance of the truth might disrupt their materially-oriented life-pattern. They might have to prepare themselves for a lowering of their worldly status. If the truth is taught by some insignificant person against whom they are prejudiced, they feel reluctant to acknowledge the veracity of his message. Psychological impediments such as these dominate the mind and prevent straight thinking. They cause one to reject something which a little honest thought would surely have led one to accept as the truth.

Since man is being tested in this world, God does not make himself manifest in visible form; He appears in the form of truth. Man must endeavour to recognize truth as enshrining God and bow down before it. Whenever truth appears on earth, it is as if God has appeared in all His majesty. If one rejects it on the grounds of prejudice, pride or expediency, then one has rejected God Himself. This action shows that one has failed to recognize God in the truth. One has put oneself above God and given precedence to one's own requirements. God will have scant regard for such people on the Day of Judgement and, on that day, whomsoever God scorns will find no refuge on earth or in heaven. They will wander helplessly, forever abject and forlorn.

The Reward of God

Closeness to God should mean that He is ever in one's thoughts. Awareness of God's greatness should reduce one's own being to insignificance. Heaven and hell should be so much a part of faith, that one should be more concerned with well-being (or affliction) in the after-life than one's condition in the present world. On so high a spiritual plain should one be that one's faults should begin to appear in the same light as an enemy's. Personal prejudice should play no part in decision-making and even those with whom one disagrees, or against whom one bears some grudge, should be prayed for from the heart. Denial of truth should be seen as self-destruction and destroying another's home should be regarded as tantamount to setting one's own home ablaze. Such is the God-fearing life and only those who lead it will be given a place in God's paradise.

To His true servants in this world, God has promised supremacy. But this is not the real reward for their piety; it is merely a forerunner of the true recompense which will await them in eternity. It is then that they will be honoured with everlasting supremacy. God will rid them of their fear and grief, and accord to them His everlasting beneficence.

The Islamic Life

Islam can be summed up very briefly: fear of God and benevolence towards others. A Muslim is one who realizes God's omnipotence and man's utter helplessness in comparison. The power which man apparently wields has been given to him only so that he may be tested by it. When his trials are at an end, God will reveal to him a hitherto unseen world. Then, astoundingly, God's divinity on the one hand and man's total helplessness on the other, will become as plain as daylight. There will be such revelations of reality on that day as man will have no choice but to accept.

The Muslim is fully able to anticipate the advent of this day before its actual arrival. He lives as if he is actually seeing God watching over him. When he speaks, his faith holds his tongue in check, constraining him to speak the truth or else remain silent. When he walks, it is as if God were in front of him, forcing him to proceed and he would never dare incur his Lord's displeasure.

Such a person bears nothing but goodwill towards God's servants. He regards them with compassion, for that is the way God looks upon them. When he has dealings with others, he judges himself by the same just criteria and values as the Creator and Master of the universe will eventually apply to all beings.

From God's Point of View

If one wears ordinary spectacles, everything will appear as it is. If, on the other hand, one wears dark glasses, everything will take on different hue, depending on the colour of the glasses. The same applies to the human intellect. When one observes someone, one does so through the lenses of one's own intellect. If the lens is clear, then everything will appear as it is. If it is tinted, then everything, regardless of its true nature, will take on a false appearance.

The human mind is either God-oriented or self-oriented. It sees people through either divine or personal lenses. These are two very different ways of seeing things. Those who look at matters from God's point of view are realistic in their outlook. They judge things on merit, not on the basis of their own biased opinions. They see people as they really are, for that is how God views them. Others see things quite differently. They view people in the light of their own interests and prejudices. Their friends are beautiful, their enemies are ugly. Members of their own clique are "white", strangers "black". The true Muslim sees everybody from God's point of view. He does not judge others on the basis of personal opinion.

It is this divine vision which really makes a person. It makes one treat others as they should be treated. It makes one realistic as far as this world is concerned and righteous with regard to the world hereafter.

Care in All Matters

An unbeliever tends to be insensitive, but a believer should have a heightened awareness of what is right and wrong. The believer's sensitivity is not limited to God and objects generally regarded as sacrosanct; it embraces every object of creation.

When dealing with others, be they weak or strong, a believer is always scrupulous about giving them their full due as prescribed by God. He always treats animals humanely. If he is forced to exterminate some pest, he does not do so in a cruel manner. His sensitive nature would not allow him to cut down a tree or crush a flower for no good reason. He is careful not to be extravagant in his use of water, for that would amount to misuse of a gift of God.

Once a person has had the circumspection and sensitivity of faith instilled in him his disposition and actions are moulded accordingly. Faith controls his manners, speech, movements, dealings, and utilization of animate and inanimate objects. Even in emotional situations, he does not act rashly; he does not treat anybody cruelly or unsympathetically.

True belief involves a scrupulous awareness of the fact that God is watching over one, and will take one to task for what one does, both in secret and in public. A man thoroughly imbued with faith will necessarily be a more caring person.

Relinquishing Power for God

All power in this world belongs to God. None else has any strength. Nevertheless, God has granted man freedom in this world so that he may be tested. Man is the only creature free to exercise his will in a world which is otherwise entirely subjugated to the will of God. God wants to see how man utilizes the power and free will with which he has been endowed. If he is realistic, he will submit to God. Otherwise, deluded by his apparent freedom, he will continue in his rebellious ways.

Paradise is for those who have power, but disclaim all pretence to it; who fear God, though they are in a position to do the opposite; who have the chance to attach importance to themselves, but refrain from doing so, putting God first.

Such people consider that they are directly provided for by God, though such provision is concealed beneath a veil of worldly causes. They have opportunities to oppress and exploit people, but fear of God prevents them from doing so. At times they feel tempted to indulge in anger, hate and revenge, but patience cools their anger, and forgiveness obliterates any hostility or vengeance which stirs in their hearts. Where people are full of praise for them, they are balanced enough to retain their humility. God may have endowed them with abundant wealth, but they spend their wealth as God would wish. It is not personal satisfaction that

they seek; their only desire is to please their Lord. They do not live for themselves; they live only for God.

The exquisite world of paradise is for those who, of their own free will, subordinate themselves to the will of God. It is reserved for those who adhere to God's path, though they have been given rein enough to stray from it if they so desire. It will be the reward of those who, though not compelled to do so, obey God's commandments.

Life in Accordance with Reality

What is Islam? Islam means living in accordance with nature; living as one ought, face to face with reality. Man did not create himself: he was created by God. To live in accordance with reality, then, is to acknowledge the greatness of God and show appreciation of His favours. The emotions of love and fear are inherent in man. He wants something on which he can depend and upon which he can focus his efforts. If he lives in accordance with reality, he will focus all his attention on God alone for, besides Him, all things have been created: nothing besides Him has any power.

Adam is the father of all past, present and future men, so life in accordance with reality is one of benevolence to others, as if one were dealing with one's own brothers and sisters. Everyone has a conscience, which favours justice and despises cruelty and injustice. Life in accordance with reality, then, is one of kindness and justness. Death is bound to come one day. It will deprive everyone of his worldly possessions, so one who lives in accordance with reality will look at the ups and downs of life as transitory and trivial. Everybody, irrespective of worldly status, should be regarded as God's servant. When one is confronted with a truth one might feel disposed to deny it. But one should realize that, one day, everyone will have to accept truth and falsehood for what they are. One should willingly accept today what one will have to accept tomorrow.

The Trial of Man

Life is one long trial. The great paradox is that while some enjoy life, others undergo continuous suffering. In reality, however, all are the same, for their actions are being scrutinized. Everyone is being examined; it is only the conditions under which this examination is being conducted that vary.

Another factor in the trial of man is that God has made some weak and others strong. There is always the temptation to succumb to the mighty and to exploit the weak. But to do this is to take the surest road to hell. Only those who consider what is right, irrespective of circumstances or of the individuals they deal with, will prove themselves worthy of paradise, for it is often the underdog who is in the right and the mighty who are in the wrong. Even when others behave in a troublesome way, the best way to react is with mildness and circumspection, and no matter what the provocation, one should endeavour to be impartial and just.

The manner in which people respond to the various situations which confront them in life will determine their eternal abode. Those who yield to the mighty and oppress the weak will surely be punished in hell, and they would do well to remember that there are two paths which open out before them every day, one of which leads to hell and the other to paradise.

'Jihad' essentially is a peaceful struggle. One form of this peaceful struggle is dawah (communication of the message of God)

Testing Man's Fitness

Man has complete freedom of will in this world, but only God can actually make things happen. Man is just being put to the test on earth. His reactions to various circumstances are being scrutinized.

Some respond to events in a patient, just and reasonable manner. Their actions earn them credit. Others react quite differently. Their hot-headedness, cruelty, and blindness to the truth earn them nothing but blame. Some profess to be Muslims. But if they adopt a disparaging, deceptive and malicious attitude towards others, their claim is immediately proved false. God will particularly help those whom they wrong in order to show where the truth lies. Some uphold the truth, yet they are left in a helpless and forlorn state. Others are blind to the truth, yet have every conceivable worldly luxury at their disposal. This situation may seem paradoxical, but it occurs for a reason: to set apart those who cling to externals and deserve to be classed along with other deniers of the truth.

Everything man experiences in this world, be it power or weakness, wealth or poverty, is a test. Worldly triumph is no cause to rejoice; nor should worldly loss cause one grief. Both winner and loser are being tested to see how they react to their respective situations. It is on the basis of this reaction that they will be adjudged fit for either heaven or hell.

Some Earn the World, Others Eternity

A man set on making money, chooses a lucrative profession and devotes all his time and energies to it. If his efforts yield financial reward, well and good. If not, he is upset about his choice of profession. If he is after fame and prestige, he looks for a career which holds the promise of publicity. He thrives on popularity and esteem. If these things elude him, he feels as if all is lost. If a man is thirsty for power, his overriding ambition is to rule others. He longs to have people under him and to control their fortunes. Such people seek worldly reward for their actions, but no matter how much they manage to acquire in this world, they will have no share in the hereafter.

God's true servant on the other hand, seeks everlasting reward for his actions and concentrates on an eternal goal. While people are busy in worldly affairs, he functions in the silent world of nature. While people display their fervour in public, he struggles on in seclusion. He has no thought of worldly fame or success. He longs solely for God's mercy and grace. Outwardly he belongs to this world, but mentally and emotionally he dwells in the next. People are absorbed in the world of forms, whereas he is lost in God's hidden cosmos.

Stimulus and Response

Human character can be guarded from the way people respond to day-to-day events. Everything that happens affects one in one way or another. The kind of response we make to what is going on around us is determined by our mentality. If one is unmindful of God, one will react in whatever manner one's own desires and interests demand. If, however, one's faith is strong, each and every event throughout one's entire life

reminds one of God; the entire range of one's emotions is then concentrated not on oneself, but on God.

Fortunes in life never cease to fluctuate. Ease is soon followed by hardship. It is never long before praise and approval give way to criticism and accusation. No sooner do events begin to follow a satisfactory course than they suddenly take a turn for the worse. Ups and downs of this nature are all in the nature of a trial. If one is to succeed in life's trial, these changes of fortune should turn one more and more towards God and away from the self, and, humble and resigned when stricken by misfortune, one should be thankful in one's heart for the happiness and comfort granted by God.

People's response to various circumstances is being put to the test on earth. This is what their worldly trial really consists of. If given wealth and power, they become proud, then they are failures, but if they remain humble under the same circumstances, they have succeeded. They have failed if they are obstinate and contemptuous towards their rivals or opponents: if they are unjust to others, they are bound to come to grief themselves: if they are fair to all and sundry, they will emerge triumphant from life's trial.

It's Selection Time

The constellation closest to earth contains at least two hundred million stars and countless such constellations are scattered throughout space. The universe is incredibly vast but, as far as we know, there is only one solar system and, within that solar system, our planet, earth, is situated. There is no planet to compare with earth in the entire universe and, upon it, dwells that unique being called man. Man lives. He moves and talks. He sees and hears. He thinks and understands. He is responsible for his actions. There is no doubt about man's uniqueness. But the question remains: why has God created him so? The answer is: in order to select those who will abide in the even more exquisite and ideal world of paradise.

The world is full of creatures who, subject to God, involuntarily do as God bids them. God wills it, however, that man should be obedient of his own accord. God seeks those who are willing to renounce the power that they possess; who manage to see God despite His invisibility; who belong to the hereafter, though they dwell on earth; who accept and obey, though they are capable of denial and rebellion. Those who display such propensities in the world will be welcomed to paradise in the hereafter. Paradise is an ideal abode for ideal individuals. So enchanting and alluring will it be, that no one in it will ever have a feeling of tedium. No pain or apprehension will mar its delight. Man will find there all that he desires.

People of God

Everyone lives for something or another. Some live for their families. Some for money. Some for worldly tribute and power. A life which revolves around these things cannot be a life of faith. A life of faith is one lived for God's sake alone. When one lives for God, one's entire life revolves around Him. One's thoughts and desires are focused on Him alone. One thinks about what pleases and displeases God when one speaks. One limits one's movements to the bounds that God has laid down.

The human brain inevitably forms some sort of response to any message that it receives. Those who live for God will produce divinely inspired responses. Their utterances will not be based on the promptings of

their own selves. They consider what will be acceptable to God and what will be cast aside when they come before Him. If their conscience tells them that certain words are displeasing to God, then they avoid them. They only say what they know God would like them to.

When one faces some problem, one immediately chooses a method of dealing with it. If one lives in God, then one will not act on impulse; one will consider what is just and unjust in God's sight. Though fame and wealth may lie on the path of injustice, one forsakes that path. One adheres to the path of justice, though it may incur worldly loss and unpopularity. One looks at everything from God's point of view, and not from any other standpoint.

Abstaining From Baseness

A believer makes mistakes, but does not stoop to baseness. Mistakes are often made in sudden fits of emotion, but, when the passion cools, one becomes conscious of the error and feels ashamed of one's own wrongdoing. The next step is to seek out the wronged person, beg forgiveness and make amends. If compensation can be given, well and good. If not, one prays: "Lord, forgive my mistake and accept this salutary prayer from me on behalf of the person I have wronged!"

A mean person would behave in quite a different way, for meanness is a permanent state of mind rather than a temporary condition. A person who has stooped so low feels neither shame nor any urge to make amends for what has passed. In fact, he would be happy to see his opponent suffer more. If he has a grievance against someone, he is not satisfied merely with a severance of relations, but does his utmost to lay that person low. He makes slanderous accusations and concocts vicious plots against him. He does not just point out a person's errors; he seeks to discredit that person completely and isolate him from the rest of society. He tries to undo whatever his enemy has accomplished and bring all his gain to nought. This all shows a lack of magnanimity and, as such, is unbecoming to a believer.

Refusal to admit one's faults is contemptible. It is likewise despicable to favour one's own kith and kin, while treating others with disdain. A base person cannot rise above envy and vindictiveness. Such a person is a long way from God and close to the devil.

A Believer Lives for God

A small infant owes everything to his parents. His life revolves around them. So a believer's life should revolve around God. God should dwell in his reflections. He should fear and love God alone. He should do everything for God's sake. He should put total trust in God, his Guardian and Protector.

Usually, people live for mundane things. That is why they never find contentment. They either live for personalities or for worldly splendours. Either their families mean everything to them, or else they have made prestige and wealth their ultimate goals in life. Some are obsessed with hatred. Some live to thwart, humiliate or ruin others. All these ways of living are based on false notions. They are placing total reliance on things which are ephemeral and out of place in God's cosmic order. These things can never give man true peace of mind. They do not allow one to proceed along the divine path, which is the only road to salvation. In this world all things live for God. If man succours himself otherwise, he will eventually find himself helpless and on a false path.

A startling transformation takes place in a person who starts living for God. He finds silence more gratifying than speech. He is happier to obey than to rebel, to forgive than to hold grudges, he tries to hide other's faults. He is unassuming and self-effacing. He is not interested in occupying a privileged position.

Thinking on a Higher Plane

In stormy weather small, weak-winged birds are trapped by the storm. Large birds, with their strong wings, can fly above it. A person who can ride above his circumstances is like one of these big birds which can ride any storm.

Likewise there are two levels of thinking. Some think in relation to their immediate circumstances. Their thoughts are inextricably linked to the issues in which they are involved. Others, like big birds of the storm, rise above their immediate situation. Their thoughts are not affected by circumstances. They form their opinions on a higher level.

Believers think in 'big bird' style. They rise above their circumstances. Even when in trouble, they are thankful to God. In the most distraught of conditions they stick to their religion. They are benevolent and just towards others, even if they have grievances against them. Their personalities develop irrespective of circumstances. They are not products of situations, dwelling as they do outside life's storm, and not allowing themselves to be tossed about in its turbulent winds.

Unbelievers react to life's problems in an unreflective way, whereas believers always look at matters positively. Unbelievers increase their own worth at the expense of others; believers know that the only way to true success lies in developing one's own potential. Unbelievers are concerned with worldly things; believers with eternity. An unbelieving heart is attached to human beings; a heart full of faith is always with God.

Realizing One's Own Mistakes

People who are in the habit of filling out their sentences with unnecessary words are usually quite unaware of their own habit. If however, someone else, does the same thing, they notice it immediately.

This is a common human fault. People are usually well-informed about others' faults. They ferret out shortcomings in other people, but pretend to know nothing about what they and their friends do wrong. Yet, it is acknowledgement of one's own faults rather than skill in noticing those of others which will benefit one in God's presence. To notice others' mistakes is to show God that one has been altogether too attentive to worldly matters. On the Day of Judgement, a severe punishment awaits one who has been guilty of their error.

God has given man the power of distinguishing between good and evil. People should use this power to avoid paths leading to hell and keep to the road destined for paradise. If one is following a false path oneself, one's exhortation of others to the true way shows an obvious misuse of one's discretion. One is using it to accelerate one's own journey to hell, for, to preach what one fails to practice is an offence in the eyes of God; it is not an action which will earn one any credit.

The position of peace in Islam is sacrosanct, while war in Islam is allowed only in exceptional cases when it cannot be avoided.

A Believer's Wealth

It is written in the Qur'an; "To those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God, give tidings of a painful doom. The day will surely come when their treasures will be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith. They will be told: "Here are the riches which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what you used to hoard" (9:35). When this verse was revealed, the companions of the Prophet wondered what kind of wealth they should accumulate instead. Umer, may God be pleased with him, went to the Prophet and put this question to him on their behalf. The Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, replied: "Each of you should acquire a heart grateful to God, and a tongue accustomed to His remembrance, and a believing spouse who will be of assistance in matters relating to eternity." (Ibn Majah)

Wealth is of use only when it can solve the problems of life. The greatest problem of believers concerns the next world, so they consider real wealth to be that which will be of use to them there. In order to obtain such wealth, one should always be thankful to God for His blessings. One's attachment to God should be such that He is always in one's mind and heart. If one has set one's sights on life everlasting, one will prefer one's companion in life to be similarly disposed. There is no greater wealth in life than a partner who, instead of enticing one towards ephemeral, mundane pleasures, assists one on the path of eternity.

People see wealth in gold and silver, but a believer's wealth is God. That which brings him nearer to his Lord and makes him eligible for God's blessings in the life to come, is to him of supreme importance.

Making a Living

A believer should look at his means of subsistence as a necessity; he should never make these means his goal in life. His objective should be eternity, and worldly things should be just the bare necessities. The difference between believers' and unbelievers' attitudes to the world is essentially one of priorities. Unbelievers aim to make as much money as possible: believers should aim to make a living as honestly as they can. Unbelievers expect their careers to pave the way to the fulfillment of their ambitions: believers should merely seek to be independent of others. Unbelievers live on a mundane plane they want to receive their earnings in this world. Believers live on an other-worldly plane and wish to see their efforts rewarded in eternity. They are just filling in time in this world. Their ambitions will be fulfilled in the next.

Making a living is a matter of crucial importance to every individual. No one is exempt from the struggle for subsistence. Islam simply makes sure that it remains a matter of necessity and does not become the sole objective of anyone's life. The Islamic view is that one's livelihood should not become the be-all and end-all of a person's life; that one's heart should be with God, even when engaged in one's worldly tasks; that one should have total trust in God.

Unbelievers use wealth to improve their standard of living. Believers, on the other hand, spend it on themselves only in so far as is necessary; the remainder they give away in God's path. Unbelievers consider money as a means of future security, but believers use it to ensure their prosperity in life-everlasting. Making a living is important for everyone, but believers should ensure that this task is accomplished in an honest manner, and then be happy with their lot. Unbelievers tend to be arbitrary in their methods and never cease to want more.

Islam and Infidelity

Islam is acknowledgement and infidelity is denial. Man may seem to be free to do or say what he likes in the world, but, in reality, everything belongs to God. Whatever anybody has is His gift. Nobody, save God, has any power. God is always in a position to seize and punish man. Islam is acknowledgement of this fact and believers live in accordance with it. Infidelity is denial and unwillingness to base one's life on a realistic foundation.

A man can put his hand into a blazing fire if he wants to, but he refrains from doing so: he bows to reality. The freedom which man seems to enjoy in this world is only a test. Only if man is free, can it become clear who chooses to rebel against reality and who acknowledges it and submits to God. If one accepts God's divinity and bases one's life on reality, then one has truly embraced Islam and can enjoy God's everlasting blessings. If one denies this reality and refuses to accept God as Master, and be His servant, then one's action amounts to unbelief and one will be exposed to dreadful punishment on the Day of Judgement.

To accept the Islamic way entails undergoing an immense change within oneself. It means that one's thoughts, actions and treatment of others take on the most proper and most exemplary form imaginable, for one's whole life will then be in harmony with reality. Unbelievers tend to contradict reality in everything that they do. Their actions can only lead them to their doom.

Do As You Would be Done By

Why is it that supplications made to God often go unheeded? The reason is that people ask God for that which they themselves are not prepared to give to others. They ask God for protection against oppression, but they are the first to inflict it on others when they have the chance. They ask God to safeguard their lives and property, yet are quick to kill and seize someone else's property if they can. They ask God for an honourable life, yet are quite happy to humiliate others. They ask God to protect them from enemy plots, yet they plot the destruction of anybody with whom they disagree. One must be sincere in whatever one is praying for. One's supplication should emanate from one's innermost being. It should not just be empty words. When one is sincere, one's life becomes devoid of contradictions. No difference remains between what one prays for and what one practices. If one really detests cruelty and objects to others indulging in it, then one will never resort to it oneself. If one stoops to persecuting others, then one cannot be sincere when one protests about being persecuted. The prayer of a person who does not put words into action will not be graced by divine acceptance. If one is causing conflict among people, yet at the same time praying for harmony, one's prayer must seem more like a jest to God, and can earn one only retribution. For prayers to be acceptable, it is essential that one should give others what one seeks for oneself. One should treat others with the same mercy and compassion as one desires for oneself. Otherwise one's prayer will be an offence rather than a supplication before God.

The truly desirable revolution is that which permits gradual and beneficial changes. And this can be achieved only on the basis of non-violence.

The Relationship Between Man and God

It is written in the Qur'an: "And when My servants question you concerning Me, tell them that I am close at hand. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he cries to Me. So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order they may be led aright." (2:186). This shows that the relationship between man and God is reciprocal: man offers God what he has, then God bestows His favours in return. Man offers his Lord a gift of realization, piety and thankfulness. In return, God provides him with eternal guidance and prosperity.

Man can deal with any problem in either of two ways: the pious and morally proper way, or the way in which such values are abandoned. The correct answer to the call of God is for one to use one's intellect to ascertain the right course of action and then follow it, difficult as it may seem. One then automatically avoids the easy, though misguided, way.

Sometimes one is faced with the choice between callous and unjust action on the one hand and righteous, fair treatment on the other. If one answers God's call as it should be answered, one will not flinch from the righteous path and will refrain from oppression and cruelty.

Man is free to consider what he has, within him and outside, to be the result of chance; alternatively he may look at it all as the fruits of his efforts; or he can acknowledge reality and consider it all as having come from God. A person who adopts this latter course will answer the call of God implicit in every blessing by exclaiming, "Lord, You are the bestower and You have given us everything!" When one has offered one's mind and heart to God in this way, then God will provide one with guidance, which means a righteous life in this world and eternal paradise in the next.

Fasting

Believers, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may ward off evil. Fast a certain number of days; but if any of you be sick or on a journey, let him fast a similar number of other days, and it is incumbent upon those who can afford it to make a sacrifice by feeding a needy person. He who does good of his own accord shall be well rewarded, but to fast is better for you, if you but knew it. In the month of Ramadan the Qur'an was revealed, a book of guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance distinguishing right from wrong. So those of you who witness the month should fast during it. But anyone who is sick or on a journey may fast a similar number of other days. God desires ease for you, not hardship. He desires you to fast the whole month so that you may magnify God for having guided you and He wishes you to render thanks (2:183-186).

Serving God

To God belongs all that the heavens and the earth contain. Whether you reveal your thoughts or hide them, God will bring you to account for them. He will forgive whom He will and punish whom He will; He has power over all things. The Prophet believes in what has been revealed to him by his Lord and so do the faithful. They all believe in God and His angels, His scriptures and His prophets. We make no distinction

between any of His prophets. They say: "We hear and We obey. Forgive us, Lord; to You we shall return." God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear. It shall be requited for whatever good and whatever evil it has done. "Lord do not take us to task if we forget or lapse into error. Lord, do not lay on us the burden You laid on those before us. Lord, do not charge us with more than we can bear. Pardon us, forgive us, and have mercy on us, You alone are our Protector. Help us against the unbelievers." (2:284-286).

The Shari'ah

The Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to show kindness to parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, show them no sign of impatience, nor rebuke them; but speak kindly to them. Treat them with humility and tenderness and say: "Lord, be merciful to them even as they cherished and reared me when I was an infant." Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts; He knows if you are righteous. He is Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again. Give to the near of kin their due, and also to the destitute and to the wayfarers. Do not squander your substance wastefully, for the wasteful are Satan's brothers; and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord. But if, while waiting for your Lord's bounty, you lack the means to assist them then at least speak to them kindly. Be neither miserly or prodigal, for then you should either be reproached or reduced to penury. Your Lord gives abundantly to whom He wills and sparingly to whom He pleases. He knows and observes His servants. You shall not slay your children for fear of want. We will provide for them and for you. To kill them is a great sin. Do not commit adultery, for it is indecent and evil. Do not slay any person whom God has forbidden you to kill, except for a just cause. If someone is slain unjustly, to his heir We have given the right of retaliation. But let him not carry his vengeance too far, for his victim in turn will be assisted and avenged. Do not interfere with the property of orphans except with the best of motives, until they reach maturity. Keep your promises; you are accountable for all that you promise. Give full measure when you measure and weigh with even scales; that is fair and better in the end. Do not pursue what you do not know; man's eyes, ears and heart each of his senses will be closely questioned. Do not walk on the earth with haughty self-conceit; you cannot cleave the earth, nor can you rival the mountains in stature. All this is evil and odious in the sight of your Lord. These injunctions are but a part of the wisdom with which your Lord has inspired you. Do not appoint another god with God, or you will be cast into Hell, despised and rejected (17:23-39).

The goal of the Islamic mission is to make people realize the existence of the one and only God and to strive to bring about a revolution in their hearts and minds.

The Servants of the Merciful

The true servants of the Merciful are those who walk humbly upon the earth and say: "Peace!" to the ignorant who accost them: who pass the night standing and prostrate in adoration of their Lord; who say: "Lord ward off from us the punishment of Hell, for its punishment is everlasting, an evil dwelling and an evil resting-place"; who, when they spend, are neither wasteful nor niggardly, but keep the golden mean; who invoke no other god besides God, and do not kill save for a just cause; who do not commit adultery. He that does this shall meet with evil: his punishment shall be doubled on the Day of Resurrection and in disgrace he shall abide forever unless he repent and believe and do good works, for then God will change his sins to good actions; God is Forgiving and Merciful: he that repents and does good works truly returns to God; who do not bear false witness and when they pass by idle talk, pass by with dignity; who do not turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the revelations of their Lord when they are reminded of them; who say: "Lord, give us joy in our spouses and offspring, and make us examples to those who are God-fearing." These shall be rewarded with the highest heaven for their patient endurance. There they shall be welcomed with a greeting and peace, and there they shall abide forever; a blessed dwelling and a blessed resting place (25:63-76).

Trust in God

There is but one God. In Him let the believers put their trust. Believers, you have an enemy in your spouses and children: beware of them. But if you overlook their offences and forgive and pardon them, then know that God is Forgiving and Merciful. Your wealth and your children are but a temptation. God's reward is great. Therefore fear Him with all your hearts and be attentive, obedient and charitable for the good of your own selves; for those who guard themselves from their own avarice will surely prosper. If you give God a generous loan, He will repay you twofold and will forgive you, for God is Ever Responsive to gratitude and is Most Forbearing (64:13-18).



GOD ARISES

A book by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in serials.

III

The Method of Argument

The Line of Argument

The modern age versus religion is basically a case of reasoned argument versus the acceptance of revelation. Modernity has it that religious beliefs and dogmas do not pass muster when subjected to tests devised by the most advanced methods of scientific reasoning. Today's apprehension of reality is through observation and experiment, but since religious beliefs concern the supra-rational sphere of existence, they are thus considered unverifiable. Arguments in their favour are based entirely on assumption and inference: this being so, they are declared to have no acceptable scientific basis. In his book, *Religion and the Scientific Outlook*, T.R. Miles writes

It might be said that metaphysicians of the past have done something comparable to writing a cheque without adequate funds in the bank. They have used words without proper 'cash' to back them; they have been unable to give their words 'cash-value' in terms of state of affairs. 'The Absolute is incapable of evolution and progress' is a grammatically correct sentence; but the words are like a dud cheque, and cannot be 'cashed'

This statement purports to show that the claims of religion are unfounded as they are neither based on any valid argument, nor scientifically demonstrable; religion belongs strictly to the domain of faith, and reality is considered verifiable as such only when it is external to this domain. But this case against religion has itself no basis in fact.

It should not be forgotten that the modern method of reasoning does not insist that only those things which can come under direct observation have a real existence. A scientific supposition which is based on direct observation can also be as much a fact as the result of scientific experiment. We cannot, however, say that a scientific experiment is always right simply however, say because it is an experiment, just as we cannot take it that a scientific supposition is wrong, simply because it is a supposition. Either has the possibility of being right or wrong.

The distinguished physicist, Robert Morris Page, makes the important point that the "test of an hypothesis involves the establishment of conditions consistent with the hypothesis to produce results predicted by the hypothesis *on the assumption that the hypothesis is true*. He then goes on to narrate an incident which clearly bears this out.

When ships were built of wood because it was commonly believed that in order to float they had to be built of materials lighter than water, the proposition was made that ships could be built of iron and still float. A certain blacksmith stated that ships built of iron could not float because iron would not float, and he proved his point by tossing a horseshoe into a tub of water. His assumption that the hypothesis was untrue foreclosed the possibility of his devising an experiment consistent with the hypothesis which might have produced the result predicted by the hypothesis. Had he assumed the hypothesis to be true, he would have tossed an iron wash basin into the tub of water instead of an -iron horseshoe.'

To all intents and purposes, the blacksmith had conducted an experiment and had arrived at the truth. We must obviously be extremely wary of activities which are said to be experiments and which are, therefore, supposed to produce correct results.

We must also be wary of incomplete or inadequate observation. In the days before high-powered telescopes had been developed, ordinary telescopes revealed distant clusters of heavenly bodies as masses of diffused light. On the basis of such observation, a theory was advanced that those heavenly bodies were actually gaseous clouds undergoing a formative process which would turn them into stars. But when these bodies were observed later through more powerful telescopes, it was noticed that what had initially appeared as luminous clouds was, in fact, a whole galaxy of completely formed stars which had obviously only appeared gaseous in composition because of its enormous distance from the earth.

It may not be possible to prove the existence of God by observing Him through a telescope, but it should be remembered that we do base our arguments for His existence on the meaningfulness and design of the visible universe. Claude M. Hathaway, the designer of the "electric brain" for the U.S. National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics at Langley

Field writes in an essay entitled "The Great Designer" of what he thinks of the rational bases of his belief in a supernatural God. He states, most pertinently that "design requires a designer". As an engineer he had learned to appraise order and to appreciate the difficulties associated with design which brings together the forces, materials and laws of Nature in such a way as to accomplish a desired objective. He had, in short, learned to appreciate the problem of design by being faced with the problems of design.

It was my job several years ago to design an electric computer that would rapidly solve some complicated equations encountered in two-dimensional stress theory. This problem was solved by an assembly of hundreds of vacuum tubes, electro-mechanical devices, and complicated circuitry, and the completed "brain", in a cabinet about the size of three large pianos, is still in use by the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics at Langley Field. After working on this computer for a year or two, and after facing and solving the many design problems which it presented, it is completely irrational to me to think that such a device could come into being in any other way than through the agency of an intelligent designer.

Now the world around us is a vast assembly of design or order, independent but interrelated, vastly more complex in every small detail than my "electronic brain." If my computer required a designer, how much more so did that complex physio-chemical-biological machine which is my human body - which in turn is but an extremely minute part of the well-nigh infinite cosmos?

It is the perfection of the functioning and intricacy of design of the universe which brings us to the conclusion that it must be the creation of some divine mind.

Our reasoning does not directly prove the existence of God, but it certainly establishes a credible framework within which one is, of necessity, induced to believe in God. The point must be made that observation and experiment are not absolute sources of knowledge in themselves. Moreover, it must also be accepted that our direct experience and observation alone rarely yield complete knowledge. For instance, if it is claimed that water harbours micro-organisms, this appears to be a very queer assertion. But the moment we look at water through a microscope, it is seen to be true. Similarly, the claim that the earth is round - an inference - must be backed up, not by unaided human observation, but by pictures taken by telescopic cameras from spacecraft.

The modern age had undoubtedly seen the invention of a number of sophisticated instruments which enable us to experiment and make observations on a much wider and more detailed scale than was hitherto possible. But the things that such devices are able to bring under our observation and within our experience are in themselves superficial and relatively unimportant. What is important is the theory which is based on them. All the theories later formulated on the basis of these observations and experiments relate to the invisible and, as such, the unobservable. Looked at as a matter of theorizing, the whole of science boils down to an explanation of certain observations. Although theories themselves do not come under observation, the process of observation and experiment compel scientists to believe that such and such facts may be accepted as established.

But the antagonists of religion deny believers the right to affirm the truths by the same scientific methods by which they imagine they have rejected religion. They should then find themselves obliged to concede that religion is a rational matter. It is rather like having an efficient lawyer for the prosecution, but disallowing a lawyer of similar calibre for the defendant just in case the latter should benefit from the legal system! Then suppose we accepted the definition of reality as something which we could directly observe and experience, the claims of the anti-religionists that there is no God, no divine power at the helm of things, would be justifiable only if they could prove that every single thing which was observable in the universe had been observed by them, and that neither God, angels, heaven, nor hell had been discovered. Obviously, they are not in a position to do so. Then what method, or procedure, has provided them with the basis for an argument against religion? Whatever it is, it is not based on the direct observation of religion, but on an explanation of certain observations. For instance, the discovery of gravitation led them to believe that there was no God sustaining the universe, since the law of gravitation was there to explain this phenomenon. It is clear that the observation on which this theory is based is not of the non-existence of God. That is, no telescope has quite finally given us the news that this universe is free from any signs of God. His non-existence had rather been inferred from the observation of quite other events.

I maintain that the method of argument which is based on inference and has been considered in modern times sufficiently valid to reject religion, can - it would appear paradoxically - provide the soundest proofs of the veracity of religion. The fault does not lie in the principle of the argument used, but in its application. When correctly applied, the result will confound the anti-religionists.

Scientists and materialists should stop and think that they cannot move forward by so much as an inch without using terms like force, energy, nature, laws of nature, etc. But do any of them know what force is, or what nature is? The maximum that scientists have managed to contribute is an interpretative vocabulary by which the invisible causes - unknown and unknowable - of certain known occurrences and manifestations may be referred to. For instance, the electron is unobservable. It is so tiny that neither can a microscope show it, nor a weighing scale weigh it. Yet, in the world of science, the existence of the electron is considered a reality. This is because although the electron itself is not visible, some of its effects repeatedly come within our experience, and no explanation can be found for them other than the existence of a system like that of the electron. The electron is a supposition, but since the basis of this supposition is indirect observation, science must concede that it exists.

Yet a scientist is unable to offer any explanation of its inner reality, in the same way that a religious man cannot explain God. Both of them in their respective fields harbour a blind faith in an unknowable cause of the universe. According to Dr. Alexis Carrel, "The mathematical universe is a magnificent network of calculations and hypotheses in which there exists nothing but unutterable abstractions consisting only of equations of symbols."³

Science does not, and can not claim that reality is limited only to what enters directly into our experience through the senses. We can see with our own eyes that water is a liquid, but the fact that each molecule of water consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen is something which escapes us, because these atoms are not visible. But perceived facts are far from being the only facts we can know. There are facts which we can know of, rather than know. The way to arrive at them is by inference. For instance, we apprehend water by direct perception of its appearance. If I examine a drop of water through a microscope, I can have a better understanding of it. But it is only by inference, and not by direct observation that I can grasp the fact that each molecule of water is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen.

A.E. Mander, in his book *Clearer Thinking*, observes with great pertinence :

It is useful to reflect that, if we were equipped with different senses, all that we now perceive would be unknowable to us by direct perception. For example, if our eyes were as powerful as a microscope, we should be able to see bacteria. But we could not then perceive elephants. We should be obliged to infer their existence.

Similarly, we now perceive the phenomena, which, being of wavelengths lying within certain limits, are registered by our sense of sight. 'There are millions of facts we see. Yet if our eyes were differently constructed so that they were turned to long wave-lengths instead of very short ones, then we should have direct sense-perceptions of wireless waves, which now we know only by inference, but we should then have no direct perception of all that part of the universe which is now visible to our eyes. We could only infer it (p. 48).

Later, he goes on to remark:

Of all the facts in the universe of fact, we can know some, relatively few, by sense-perception. But how can we come to know of others? By inference, or reasoning. Inference or reasoning is a mode of thinking by which, starting from something known, we end by forming a belief that there exists a certain fact hitherto unknown.

How can we be sure that there is any validity in this thought-process that we call 'reasoning'? How can we be sure that the belief which we form by reasoning is true?

The answer to this is that we do begin by simply assuming that our methods of reasoning are reliable, that they lead us to conclusions which correspond with facts. Starting from facts known by sense-perception, we may reason to the conclusion that some other fact, though not yet perceived, exists. We may thus be as sure of an inferred fact as we are of any perceived fact, provided that our original data are perceived facts.

The same method of reasoning leads us to thousands of different conclusions. They are now so highly probable that we can regard them as approximate certainties (p. 49).

This basic principle may be summed up in a single sentence: The reasoning process is valid because the universe of fact is rational (p. 50).

The universe of fact is a harmonious whole. All facts are consistent with one another with an astonishing organization and regularity. Therefore, any method of study which does not bring the harmony and balance among facts into bold relief cannot be valid. Emphasising this point, Mander observes:

'The perceived facts are only isolated & fragments of the universe of fact, only patches of fact. All that we know

by sense-perception is partial and patchy, meaningless when regarded by itself. It is only when we come to know more facts - many more than we can directly perceive - that we begin to discover among them the first signs of order, regularity and system.

He makes his point with a very simple example:

We may perceive a bird, after striking a telephone wire, fall dead to the earth. We perceive that some muscular effort is required to raise a stone from the ground. We perceive the moon passing across the sky. We perceive that it is more tiring to walk uphill than downhill. A thousand perceptions, all probably unrelated. Then an inference is made - the law of gravitation. Immediately all these perceived facts, together with this inferred fact, fit together; and so we are able to recognize order, regularity, system, among them all. The perceived facts, regarded by themselves, are irregular, unrelated, and chaotic. But the perceived facts and the inferred facts together make up a definite pattern.

A fact is said to be 'explained' when we are able to show how it fits into a system of facts; when we are able to recognize it as part of a regular, orderly, inter-related whole (p.51).

Further to this he says:

Another way of saying that we have explained a fact is to say that we have discovered its meaning. Or we may say we explain it by discovering the cause and conditions of its existence. All this comes to the same thing: we have fitted that fact into a definite pattern of facts; we have recognized its necessary relationship to other facts; and we have ascertained that this particular fact is only an instance of some universal law, or part of the universal order (p.52).

In the above examples, the law of gravitation, in spite of being an accepted scientific fact, is in no way observable. What scientists have observed with their own eyes, experienced as a matter of sensory perception or measured by scientific instruments is not gravity itself, but certain regularly occurring phenomena caused by gravity which compel them to believe that some force does exist which may be interpreted in terms of a law of gravitation.

It was Newton who first deduced the law of gravitation, and today it is accepted as a scientific fact throughout the world. Newton, in a letter to Bentley, comments on its nature from a purely empirical point of view:

It is incomprehensible that inanimate and insensitive matter can exert a force of attraction on another without any (visible) contact, without any medium between them.⁴

Something which is incomprehensible, because invisible, is today accepted without question as a scientific fact. Why should this be so? The answer is simply that, if we accept it, we can explain some of our otherwise unfathomable observations. It follows that a fact may be accepted as such without its actually having been subjected to observation and experiment. An invisible concept that co-ordinates various observations in our mind and throws further light on known facts is itself a fact of the same degree and quality. Mander comments:

To say that we have discovered a fact is to say, in other words, that we have discovered its meaningfulness. Or to put it another way, we explain a thing by knowing the cause of its existence and its conditions. Most of our beliefs are of this nature. In fact they are statements of observation (p. 53).

Mander then broaches the problem of observed facts.

When we speak of an observation, therefore, we always mean something more than pure sense perception. It is sense-perception plus recognition and some degree of interpretation (p. 56).

As John Stuart Mill says: 'We may fancy that we see or hear what in reality we only infer. For instance there is nothing of which we feel more directly conscious than the fact of the distance of an object from us. Yet what is perceived by the eye is nothing more than an object of a certain size and a certain shade of colour.'

Mill further remarks: 'It is too much even to say, "I saw my brother," unless we recognize that such a statement, a statement of observation, includes something more than pure sense perception. For all that we perceive, strictly, is some object of a certain shape and colouring.'

We compare this with memories of the appearance of our brother, then it is only by comparison and inference that we interpret this new sense-perception and judge that we are looking at our brother.

'All reasoning is concerned with postulation and testing of theories. Every accepted theory is a statement of a fact about

other facts. Whatever we arrive at by inference is a theory. If it can be shown to correspond with actual facts, it is true, and if not, it is false. The theory must fit all the known facts to which it refers, and only then can one proceed to deduce from it hitherto unknown facts'.

According to Mander, 'We may say that finding a theory is like discovering the pattern into which a number of particular facts and the general laws which govern them will fit. It is like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle from which one or more pieces are missing. When we have fitted together all the pieces available (the known facts), we can see what the missing pieces must be like to enable them to fit into the gaps' (p. 123).

On the basis of this very principle, scientists have agreed upon the truth of organic evolution. To Mander, this doctrine has so many arguments in its favour that it may be regarded as an 'approximate certainty'.⁵

The authors of *Science of Life* assert that "no one now denies the truth of organic evolution except for those who are ignorant, or biased or superstitious." New York's Modern Pocket Library has published a series of books entitled *Man and the Universe*, the fifth of which series hails Darwin's *The Origin of Species* as an epoch-making work, and points out that of all theories of genealogy, this one has at one and the same time received the maximum religious opposition and the maximum scientific acclaim.⁶

G.G. Simpson contends that 'the theory of evolution is a fact proved finally and conclusively, and is no more simply a conjecture or alternative hypothesis adopted just for the sake of scientific research.' *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1958) accepts organic evolution as a truth and says that after Darwin, this theory has received a general acceptance among scientists and scholars. R. S. Lull writes:

Since Darwin's day, evolution has been more and more generally accepted, until now in the minds of informed, thinking men there is no doubt that it is the only logical way whereby creation can be interpreted and understood. We are not so sure, however, as to the modus operandi, but we may rest assured that the process has been in accordance with great natural laws, some of which are as yet unknown, perhaps unknowable.⁷

One can estimate the popularity of this theory by the fact that, in his 700-page book, Lull has summarily dismissed the concept of the special creation of life in just one page and a few lines, whereas the whole of the rest of the book is devoted to the concept of organic evolution. Similarly, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1958) devotes less than a quarter of a page to the concept of creationism, while fourteen pages have been devoted to the concept of organic evolution. Here too, the evolution of life is treated as a fact and it is stated that after Darwin, this concept gained general acceptance among scientists and the intelligentsia.

Now we come to the question of whether this theory, which still receives general acceptance, has been observed by its upholder's own eyes, or its validity demonstrated by experiment. It must be conceded that, to date, this has not been done, nor will it ever be possible to do so. The reasons put forward for this are that the supposed process of organic evolution took place in too distant a past and that, in any case, it is too complicated to be subjected to observation or experiment. This is a 'logical method' - to quote Lull - of explaining the phenomenon of creation.

Then what are those arguments in favour of organic evolution which have led scholars of this modern age to proclaim the 'truth' of this concept? Here I shall deal with some of their basic aspects.

1. The study of animal life shows that there are inferior and superior species. These range from single-cell life-forms to those with billions of cells. They differ, too, qualitatively, in terms of their abilities.
2. When this initial observation is correlated with the fossils preserved in the various layers of the earth's crust, it becomes apparent that an evolutionary order exists which correspond to the point in time at which they appeared on earth. The fossils of life-forms that inhabited the earth millions of years ago, although buried in the earth, are still traceable. These reveal that in far distant ages, the animal species living on earth were very simple, but gradually evolved into more complex and developed forms. This means that all of the present forms of life did not come into existence at one point of time; the simpler forms came first and the more developed forms came later.
3. Another feature of the evolutionary process is that, in spite of the difference in species, life-forms are marked by many resemblances in their biological systems. For instance, a fish resembles a bird, a horse skeleton resembles a man's and, so on. It follows from this that all the living species have descended from the same family having one common ancestor.
4. How did one species follow another? Did some transmutation take place? It becomes clear when we think of how an

animal gives birth to many offspring, not all of which are uniform in their features, many actually being quite different from each other. These differences develop in the next generation and go on developing according to the process of natural selection. After hundreds of thousands of generations, this difference is increased to the extent that a small-necked sheep turns into a long-necked giraffe. This concept is considered so important that Haldane and Huxley, the editors of *Animal Biology*, have coined the term 'Selection of Mutation' of evolutionary changes.

It is this fourth criterion which is cited to prove the concept of evolution. That is, the supposition, or its effects, need, not have come within our direct experience, but such observations have been made as help us to make a logical inference of the truth of the supposition, or, in other words, to verify the truth of the hypothesis.

The advocates of the theory of evolution have not yet, however, carried out any observations of, or experiments on the material basis of this theory. For instance, they cannot show in a laboratory how inanimate matter can give birth to life. The only basis they have for their claim is that the physical record shows that inanimate matter existed before life came into the universe. From this they infer that life came out of inanimate matter, just as a baby emerges from its mother's womb. Similarly, the change of one species into another had not been experienced or observed. Experiments cannot be set up in a Zoo to show how the mutation of a goat into a giraffe takes place. The inference that the species did not come into existence separately has been made purely on the basis of the similarities between species and the differences that exist between siblings.

The belief, too, that intelligence has developed out of instinct, implies that man has also evolved from animals. But, in actual fact, instinct has never been seen to develop into intelligence. This is also purely an inference based on geological research which demonstrates that fossils of animals endowed with instincts are found in the lower strata, while those endowed with intelligence are to be found in the upper strata.

In all such arguments, the link between supposition and truth is only one of inference and not one of experiment or observation. Yet, on the basis of such inferential arguments, the concept of evolution in modern times has been considered a scientific fact. That is, to the modern mind, the sphere of academic facts is not limited only to those events which are known by direct experience. Rather, what logically follows from experiments and observations can be just as well accepted as established scientific facts as those facts which come directly or indirectly under our observation.

The statement is, nevertheless, debatable. Sir Arthur Keith, who is himself a staunch supporter of organic evolution, did not regard the theory of evolution either as an empirical or inferential fact, but as 'a basic dogma of rationalism'.⁸

A reputed Encyclopaedia on Science describes Darwinism as a theory based on 'explanation without demonstration'.

Why is it then that an unobservable, and non-demonstrable process is accepted as a scientific fact? Mander writes that it is because:

- a) it is consistent with all known facts;
- b) it enables scientists to explain vast multitudes of facts which are otherwise inexplicable;
- c) it is the only theory devised which is consistent with the facts (p. 112).

If this line of reasoning is considered valid enough to bear out organic evolution as a fact, the same formula could well be used to establish religion as a fact. The parallel being evident, it seems paradoxical that scientists should accept organic evolution as a fact, while rejecting religion as having no basis in fact. It is evident that their findings relate, not to the method of argument, but to the conclusion. If something of a purely physical nature is proved by the method of logical positivism, it is immediately accepted by scientists. But if anything of a spiritual nature is so proved it is rejected out of hand, for no better reason than that this conclusion throws them into a state of mental disarray. It does not fit in with their preconceived ideas! The case of the modern age versus religion is, strictly speaking, that of predisposition, and not that of particular scientific reasoning.

From the above discussion, it becomes quite clear that it is not proper to regard religion, on the one hand, as being based on faith in the unseen, and treat science, on the other hand, as being based on observation. It must be admitted that science, no less than religion, is ultimately a matter of having faith in the unseen. Scientific findings based on observation are tenable only so long as they deal with the initial and external manifestations of nature, but when it comes to defining ultimate realities answering the question 'Why?' and not the question 'How?' science must yield pride of place to religion, for it fails to answer this momentous question; it has to fall back upon faith in the unseen, something for which religion in latter times has been much criticized.

Sir Arthur Eddington's view that the table at which the scientists of today are working is, in fact, a set of two different tables is illuminating.

I have drawn up my chairs to my two tables. Two tables! Yes; there are duplicates of every object - one of these tables has been familiar to me from my earliest years. It is a commonplace object of that environment which I call the world. How shall I describe it? It has extension; it is comparatively permanent; it is coloured; above all it is substantial, it does not collapse when I lean upon it, it is a thing.

Table No. 2 is my scientific table. My scientific table is mostly emptiness. Sparsely scattered in that emptiness are numerous electric charges rushing about with great speed, but their combined bulk amounts to less than a billionth of the bulk of the table itself.'

Similarly, everything has an invisible aspect which cannot be observed even through a microscope or a telescope. It becomes comprehensible only in terms coined by physicists to fit their own particular theories. Science does, of course, by means of advanced technology, observe the outward form of things in far greater detail than the naked eye is capable of, but it can never claim to be able to observe the inner form of things. Science observes external manifestations, and accordingly forms an opinion about them. So far as discovering the ultimate reality is concerned, science can only learn about unknown facts through facts which are already known.

When a scientist attempts to correlate observed facts in the process of producing a working hypothesis, he resorts primarily to instinctive, belief like concepts in order to explain, organise and relate his findings. If the hypothesis which emerges from this stringing together of observed facts offers a reasonably satisfactory explanation for all of them, it is regarded as being 'scientific' and, therefore, as credible as an observed fact. It must also be borne in mind that an invisible reality is often regarded as a fact, simply for lack of other hypothesis which will offer a cogent explanation for it. When a scientist says electricity is a flow of electrons, he does not mean that he has seen electrons flowing through an electric wire by means of a microscope. He merely explains an observed event in terms of the movement of the switch that makes the bulb light, the fans move and the factories run. What has come within our experience is simply an external phenomenon and not, by any means, the event that is being inferred. A scientist, in short, believes in the existence of an invisible fact, after having noted its instrumentality in, or impact upon observable phenomena. But we should never forget that every fact that we believe in is always, in the beginning, a simple assumption. It is our making of an inference which connects the switch and the bulb with one another. Therefore, even after admitting this observed relationship between the switch and the bulb, the fact of whether or not the scientific hypothesis regarding this connection is real or unreal, will still remain in doubt.

It is only later, as further information emerges to support this assumption, that its truth becomes more and more evident, until we feel that our belief has finally been confirmed. If the facts discovered do not support the original hypothesis, we feel justified in discarding it.

An atom provides an irrefutable example of scientists' faith in the unseen. An atom has never physically been observed. Yet it is the greatest established truth accepted by modern science. A scholar has rightly defined scientific theories as 'mental pictures that explain known laws.' In the field of science, the body of so-called 'observed' facts are not so in the strictest sense of the word: they are simply interpretations of certain observations. Human observation, even when aided by the most sophisticated devices, can never be assumed to be absolutely perfect. All interpretations based on human observation are, therefore, relative, and may change with an improvement in the technique of observation. J.W.N. Sullivan points out in his book, *The Limitations of Science*, that:

It is evident, even from this brief survey of scientific ideas, that a true scientific theory merely means a successful working hypothesis. It is highly probable that all scientific theories are wrong. Those that we accept are verifiable within our present limits of observation. Truth, then, in science, is a pragmatic affair (p.158).

This notwithstanding, a scientist regards a hypothesis which provides a reasonable explanation for his observed facts as being in no way inferior to other academic facts based on observation. His contention is that his hypothesis is as much a matter of science as observed facts are. This, ultimately, is tantamount to a belief in the unseen. Belief in the unseen is not qualitatively different, as an intellectual activity, from belief in observed facts. It is not the same thing as 'blind faith'. It is rather the most appropriate explanation of the observed facts. Just as the corpuscular theory of light propounded by Newton was rejected by twentieth-century scientists because its explanation of the phenomenon of light was found unsatisfactory, we likewise reject the materialistic theory of the universe, because it does not offer a satisfactory explanation for the phenomenon of life and the universe.

The source of our belief in an all-powerful Divinity is exactly the same as that which a scientist takes recourse to for his scientific theories. It is only after making a thorough study of observed facts that we have reached the conclusion that the explanations offered by religion are the ultimate truth - truth of such an order that, since time immemorial, it has remained unaltered. In the light of new observations and experiments, all man-made theories which were formulated within the last few hundred years are being re-scrutinised and many, in the process, are being discarded. Religion on the other hand, presents a truth which is becoming more and more clearly manifest with every advance in the field of scientific research. It is supported and testified to by innumerable significant discoveries.

In the next chapters, we shall study the fundamental concepts of religion from this standpoint.

Notes

1. The Evidence of God, p. 26.
2. The Evidence of God in an Expanding Universe, Edited by John Clover Monsma, pp. 144-45.
3. Man the Unknown, p. 15.
4. Works of a Bentley, Vol. III p. 221.
5. Clearer Thinking, pp. 112-13.
6. Philosophers of Science, p. 224.
7. Organic Evolution, p. 15.
8. Revolt Against Reason, pp. 112.
9. A. S. Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World, (Cambridge, The University Press 1948), p. 261.

To be continued

THE SECOND SURAH
AL BAQARAH (THE COW)

Verse 23 to Verse 36

(23) And if you doubt any part of what We have bestowed from on high, step by step, upon Our servant [Muhammad], ¹⁴ then produce a surah of similar merit, and call upon any other than God to bear witness for you¹⁵ -if what you say is true! (24) And if you cannot do it - and most certainly you cannot do it - then be conscious of the fire whose fuel is human beings and stone¹⁶ which awaits all who deny the truth!

(25) But unto those who have attained to faith and do good works give the glad tiding that theirs shall be gardens through which running waters flow. Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom as their appointed sustenance, they will say, "It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance!" - for they shall be given something that will recall that [past].¹⁷ And there shall they have spouses pure, and there shall they abide.

(26) Behold, God does not disdain to propound a parable of a gnat, or of something [even] less than that.¹⁸ Now, as for those who have attained to faith, they know that it is the truth from their Sustainer - Whereas those who are bent on denying the truth say, "What could God mean by this parable?" In this way does He cause many a one to go astray, just as He guides many a one aright: but none does He cause thereby to go astray save the iniquitous,

(27) who break their bond with God after it has been established [in their nature],¹⁹ and cut asunder what God has bidden to be joined, and spread corruption on earth: these it is that shall be the losers.

(28) How can you refuse to acknowledge God, seeing that you were lifeless and He gave you life, and that He will cause you to die and then will bring you again to life, whereupon unto Him you will be brought back

(29) He it is who has created for you all that is on earth, and has applied His design to the heavens and fashioned them into seven heavens;²⁰ and He alone has full knowledge of everything.

14 I.e., the message of which the doctrine of God's oneness and uniqueness is the focal point. By the use of the word "doubt" (rayb), this passage is meant to recall the opening sentence of this *surah*: "This divine writ - let there be no doubt about it . . .", etc. The gradualness of revelation is implied in the grammatical form *nazzalna* - which is important in this context inasmuch as the opponents of the prophet argued that the Qur'an could not be of divine origin because it was being revealed gradually, and not in one piece (Zamakhshari).

15 Lit., "come forward with a surah like it, and call upon your witnesses other than God" namely, "to attest that your hypothetical literary effort could be deemed equal to any part of the Qur'an. This challenge occurs in two other places as well (10:38 and 11:13, in which latter case the unbelievers are called upon to produce ten chapters of comparable merit); See also 17:88.

16 This evidently denotes all objects of worship to which men turn instead of God - their powerlessness and inefficacy being symbolized by the lifelessness of stones - while the expression "human being" stands here for human actions deviating from the way of truth (cf. Manar I, 197): the remembrance of all of which is bound to increase the sinner's suffering in the hereafter, referred to in the Qur'an as "hell".

17 Lit., "something resembling it" Various interpretations some of them of an esoteric and highly speculative nature, have been given to this passage. For the manner in which I have translated it I am indebted to Muhammad 'Abduh (in Manar I, 232f.) who interprets the phrase, "It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance" as meaning: "It is this that we have been promised during our life on earth as a requital for faith and righteous deeds." In other words, man's actions and attitudes in this world will be mirrored in their "fruits" or consequences, in the life to come - as has been expressed elsewhere in the Qur'an in the verses, "And he who shall have done an atom's weight of good, shall behold it; and he who shall have done an atom's weight of evil, shall behold it" (99:7-8). As regards the reference to spouses" in the next sentence, it is to be noted that the term *zawj* (of which *azwaj* is the plural) signifies either of the two components of a couple - that is the male as well as the female.

(30) And Lo!²¹ Thy Sustainer said unto the angels: "Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it"²²

They said: Wilt Thou place on it such as will spread corruption thereon and shed blood-whereas it is we who extol Thy limitless glory, and praise Thee, and hallow Thy name?"

[God] answered: "verily, I know that which you do not know."

(31) And He imparted unto Adam the name of all things;²³ then He brought them within the ken of the angles and said: Declare unto Me the names of these [things] if what you say is true."²⁴

(32) They replied: "Limitless art Thou in thy glory! No knowledge have we save that which Thou hast imparted unto us. Verily, Thou alon art all-knowing, truly wise."

33) Said He: "O Adam, convey unto them the name of these [things]."

And as soon as [Adam] had conveyed unto them their names, [God] said: Did I not say unto you, Verily, I alone know the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth, and know all that you bring into the open and all that you would conceal?"

(34) And when we told the angels. "Prostrate yourselves before Adam!"²⁵ - they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis, Who refused and gloried in his arrogance: and thus he became one of those who deny the truth²⁶

(35) And We said: O Adam, dwell thou and thy wife in this garden,²⁷ and eat freely thereof, both of you whatever you may wish; but do not approach this one tree, lest one tree, lest you become wrongdoers."²⁸

(36) But Satan caused them both to stumble therein, and thus brought about the loss of their erst while state.²⁹ And so we said: "Down with you, [and be henceforth] enemies upto one another; and one earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!"³⁰

18 Lit., "something above it". i.e. relating to the quality of smallness stressed here-as one would say, "such-and such a person is the lowest of people, and even more than that" (zamakshari) The reference to "God's parables" followings as it does immediately upon a mention of the gardens of paradise and the suffering through hell-fire in the life to come, is meant to bring out the allegorical natural of this imagery.

19 The "bond with God" (conventionally translated as "God's covenant") apparently refers here to man's moral obligation to use his inborn gifts-intellectual as well as physical-in the way intended for them by God. The "establishment" of this bond arises from the faculty of reason which, if properly used, must lead man to a realization of his own weakness and dependence on a causative power and, thus, to a gradual cognition of God's will with reference to his own behaviour. This interpretation of the "bond with God" seems to be indicated by the fact that there is no mention of any specific "covenant" in either the preceding or the subsequent verses of the passage under consideration. The deliberate omission of any explanatory reference in this connection suggests tha the expression "bond with God" stands for something that is rooted in the human situation as such, and can, therefore, be perceived instinctively as well as through conscious experience: namely, that innate relationship with God which makes Him "closer to man than his neck-vein" (50:16). For an explanation of the subsequent reference to "what God has bidden to be joined", see *surah* 13, note 43.

20 The term sama' ("heaven" or "sky") is applied to anything that is spread like a canopy above any other thing. Thus, the visible skies which stretch like a vault above the earth and form, as it were its canopy, are called sama': and this is the primary meaning of this term in the Quran; in a wider sense, it has the connotation of "cosmic system". As regards the "seven heavens", it is to be borne in mind that in Arabic usage - and apparently in other Semitic languages as well - the number "seven" is often synonymous with "several" (see *Lisan al-Arab*), just as "seventy" or "seven hundred" often means "many" or "very many" (*Taj al-Arus*). This, taken together with the accepted linguistic definition that "every sama' is a sama' with regard to what is below it" (*Raghib*), may explain the "seven heavens" as denoting the multiplicity of cosmic systems.- For my rendering of thumma, at the beginning of this sentence, as "and", see *surah* 7,

- 21 The interjection "lo" seems to be the only adequate rendering, in this context, of the particle *idh*, which is usually - and without sufficient attention to its varying uses in Arabic construction-translated as "when". Although the latter rendering is often justified, *idh* is also used to indicate "the sudden, or unexpected, occurrence of a thing" (cf. Lane I, 39), or a sudden turn in the discourse. The subsequent allegory, relating as it does to the faculty of reason implanted in man, is logically connected with the preceding passages.
- 22 Lit., "establish on earth a successor" or a "vice-gerent". The term *khalifah* - derived from the verb *khalafa*, "he succeeded [another]" - is used in this allegory to denote man's rightful supremacy on earth, which is most suitably rendered by the expression "he shall inherit the earth" (in the sense of being given possession of it). see also 6: 165, 27: 62 and 35: 39, where all human beings are spoken of as *khala'if al-ard*.
- 23 Lit., "all the names". The term *ism* ("name") implies, according to all philologists, an expression "conveying the knowledge [of a thing]... applied to denote a substance or an accident or an attribute, for the purpose of distinction" (Lane IV, 1435): in philosophical terminology, a "concept". From this it may legitimately be inferred that the "knowledge of all the names" denotes here man's faculty of logical definition and, thus, of conceptual thinking. That by "Adam" the whole human race is meant here becomes obvious from the preceding reference, by the angels, to "such as will spread corruption on earth and will shed blood", as well from 7:11.
- 24 Namely, that it was who, by virtue of their purity, were better qualified to "inherit the earth".
- 25 To show that, by virtue of his ability to think conceptually, man is superior in this respect even to the angels.
- 26 For an explanation of the name of the Fallen Angel, see *Surah* 7, note 10. The fact of this "rebellion", repeatedly stressed in the Quran, has led some of the commentators to the conclusion that he could not have been one of the angels, since these are incapable of sinning: "they do not bear themselves with false pride ...and they do whatever they are bidden to do" (16: 49-50). As against this, other commentators point to the Quranic phrasing of God's command to the angels and of Iblis' refusal to obey, which makes it absolutely clear that at the time of that command he was indeed one of the heavenly host. Hence, we must assume that his "rebellion" has a purely symbolic significance and is, in reality, the outcome of a specific *function* assigned to him by God (see note 31 on 15:41).
- 27 Lit., "the garden". There is a considerable difference of opinion among the commentators as to what is meant here by "garden": a garden in the earthly sense, or the paradise that awaits the righteous in the life to come, or some special garden in the heavenly regions? According to some of the earliest commentators (see *Manar* I, 277), an earthly abode is here alluded to -namely, an environment of perfect ease, happiness and innocence. In any case, this story of Adam is obviously one of the allegories referred to in 3:7.
- 28 This tree is alluded to elsewhere in the Quran (20: 120) as "the tree of life eternal", and in the Bible (Genesis ii,9) as "the tree of life" and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". For a tentative explanation of this allegory, see note 106 on 20: 120.
- 29 Lit., "brought them out of what they had been in": i.e., by inducing them to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree.
- 30 With this sentence, the address changes from the hitherto-observed dual form to the plural: a further indication that the moral of the story relates to the human race as a whole. See also *surah* 7, note 16.
- 31 This passage connects directly with the preceding passages in that it refers to the continuous guidance vouchsafed to man through divine revelation. The reference to the children of Israel at this point, as in so many other places in the Quran, arises from the fact that their religious beliefs represented an earlier phase of the monotheistic concept which culminates in the revelation of the Quran.
- 32 A reference to the persistent Jewish belief that they alone among all nations have been graced by divine revelation. The "trifling gain" is their conviction that they are "God's chosen people" - a claim which the Quran consistently refutes.